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WHEN TWO FRAGMENTS MEET: SAPPH. FR. 22 V.

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When one reads Sappho and Alcaeus in the critical edition by Lobel and Page¹, or the monumental edition by Voigt², one feels relatively safe that the text has been edited in the most critical way and is thus free of hypotheses too compelling for overall interpretation. This is in principle true. Occasionally, however, doubts arise as to whether literary critics should trust the text that these three influential scholars have printed. The case of Sapph. fr. 22 V. (= 22 L.–P.) offers an interesting example in this respect. Specifically, the reader of Voigt’s edition who attempts to envisage a connection between the fragmentary lines 1–8 and the better preserved lines 9–19, is not provided with any warning about the basis for the papyrological join of these lines; on the contrary, this join is presented as certain.³ In what follows, I offer arguments for the separation of the aforementioned lines⁴.

The fragment was first edited by A. S. Hunt as two separate smaller fragments (P.Oxy. 1231, fr. 12 and 15)⁵, the first containing lines 1–9 (including the uncertain letter].[in the middle of line 9), and the second comprised of lines 9–19 (including the first three identifiable, but not all decipherable, letters of line 9). F. Lobel believed that the two fragments fit together, and in his 1925 edition⁶ they appear as one fragment (fr. ᾱ 11). Although his suggestion was not followed by all subsequent editors (e.g., Edmonds⁷, Diehl⁸, Reinach and Puech⁹, Treu¹⁰), it was adopted by Gallavotti¹¹ and Voigt. Already in 1925, Lobel had warned about the possibility of a new poem beginning at line 9 (“Nescio an initium novi carminis v. 9 sit statuendum”)¹², and this caution is repeated in Lobel–Page: “Fort. initium novi carminis v. 9 statuendum”. All the same, in Voigt’s edition this reservation has been omitted entirely.

Lobel did not explain why he thought the two fragments belonged together, but it was presumably on the basis of fibre-matching that he concluded so. As far as the first, mutilated part (ll. 1–8) of fr. 22 is concerned, only a few words have been preserved, and, therefore, it would be difficult to decide whether it belongs to the same poem as the second part (ll. 9–19). More specifically, the first line provides nothing comprehensible. In line 2 πῆλ’ is almost certain (followed by ᾠγι?). The following line, even with the supplements of Reinach–Puech (σευ κάλο]ν ῥέθος δοκίμ[οιμι]¹³, seems to offer no obvious association of ideas with the second part of the poem (ll. 9–19). Finally, ἀύαδην (= ἀήδην, cf. Alc. 303

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¹ *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*, Oxford 1955.

² *Sappho et Alcaeus*, Amsterdam 1971.

³ One may also wonder whether cases such as Alc. fr. 208 V., where the join of two separately transmitted fragments has been suggested (and adopted) on the basis of Alc. fr. 305b V., should be taken for granted.

⁴ I discuss Sapph. fr. 22 V. in detail in a commentary on selected fragments of Sappho that I am currently preparing, which is based on my Oxford D. Phil. thesis (*Selected Fragments of Sappho: Introductory Studies and Commentary*, 1997).

⁵ “[P.Oxy.] 1231. Sappho, Book i”, in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri X*, London 1914, 28–29 (fr. 12), 30–31 (fr. 15), and 42–43 (notes).

⁶ *Σαπφουδς μέλη. The Fragments of the Lyrical Poems of Sappho*, Oxford 1925.

⁷ *Lyra Graeca I*, London²1928.

⁸ *Anthologia Lyrica Graeca I.4*, Leipzig²1936.

⁹ *Alcée. Sappho*, Paris 1937.

¹⁰ *Sappho. Lieder*, Munich⁷1982 (¹1954, ²1958). However, Treu (190) mentions that “[i]n Pap. schließt an 33 D. [sc. fr. 22.1–8 V.] 36 D. [sc. fr. 22.9–19] an (von L. zu dem gleichen Liede gerechnet)”.
¹¹ *Saffo e Alceo. Testimonianze e Frammenti I*, Naples³1962. Note that Gallavotti (fr. 31 in his edition) prints “(inc.?)” before l. 9, and reports in his appar. crit. “questo v. 9 secondo il Lobel potrebbe essere l’inizio di altra ode”.

¹² However, the left-hand margin of the papyrus is not preserved, so we cannot tell whether a coronis was written.

¹³ The Ionic σευ is not attested in Sappho or Alcaeus (see Hamm, *Grammatik* § 190, p. 107). For the usage and form of ῥέθος (“face”), see A. M. Bowie, *The Poetic Dialect of Sappho and Alcaeus*, Salem, New Hampshire, 174.

A c 22, inc. auct. 34 a 11; see also A. M. Bowie, *The Poetic Dialect of Sappho and Alcaeus*, 77–8), the dubious αὶ δ]ὲ μὴ (see Hunt, 42 “this will involve equally short supplements in the preceding and following lines”), χεῖμων, and]οισαναλγαα.[(possibly οὐ (ego) φύ]γοισαν (Diehl in appar. crit.) ἄλγαα?) are only scattered words that provide no clue about a possible connection between the two joined fragments.

These problems can be now definitively resolved by the following observations about the condition of the papyrus itself. The only possible place where the two fragments could theoretically join is in the middle of line 9, that is to say, at the point where a dot occurs in Voigt’s edition (τ and γ are equally possible readings of the traces). After a re-examination of the original in the Bodleian Library, Oxford,¹⁴ I came to the conclusion that there is no fibre-matching between the two fragments, even at the point of the supposed join. As to the general appearance of the fibres of the recto and verso, there is no indication that the two parts of fr. 22 belonged together: besides P.Oxy. 1231 fr. 12 (= Sapph. fr. 22.1–8 V.), other fragments published as P.Oxy. 1231 could be equally well placed above the second part of fr. 22 (ll. 9–19), but again with no chance of fibre-matching.¹⁵ Moreover, near the middle on the lower part of the verso of P.Oxy. 1231 fr. 12, approximately in the middle of its width, there is a darker cluster of fibres which does not continue in the upper part of P.Oxy. 1231 fr. 15 (= Sapph. fr. 22.9–19 V.). Given these circumstances, I would argue that the joining of the two fragments is not in any way supported by the physical evidence of the papyrus.

Finally, it should be mentioned that in another publication Lobel wondered whether a small scrap of papyrus found later (fr. 291 V.) belonged to “the left-hand side of the same column as 1231 fr. 12 and 15”¹⁶. Of this fragment only a part of a word (probably a verbal form]αβασκο.[, representing ἄβασκω [= ἡβασκω [?) is intelligible, and its physical appearance suggests that the fragment cannot easily join any part of fr. 12 and 15.

To conclude: ‘Sapph. fr. 22’, as it stands in Voigt’s edition, consists of two different fragments of papyrus which are discontinuous with one another; these two fragments may indeed belong to two different poems. Now, whether line 1 of the second fragment can constitute the beginning of a poem, is another matter, which would call for a separate discussion.

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¹⁴ For the final checking of the papyrus, I also had the aid of a Video Spectral Comparator.

¹⁵ The only (unlikely, in my view) indication might be that the colour on the verso of both papyrus fragments (P.Oxy. fr. 12 and 15) becomes slightly different at a certain point on the left-hand side, thus forming something like a lighter strip (which is not easily discerned). But this proves nothing, since a) it may be accidental (similar colour difference can be traced in other fragments of P.Oxy. 1231); and b) the damage to the left-hand side of fr. 15 does not permit us to see how far the lighter strip would continue in width to the left of the verso.

¹⁶ *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* XXI, London 1951, 125.